

SOCIAL JUSTICE REFLECTIONS

REFLECTION 4: CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING 1980 - 1999



The following brought new insights, including

- The writings of feminist scriptural scholars
- The witness of Christians in El Salvador, Timor Leste and other places around the globe
- More revelations of the horrific scale of church child sexual abuse, betrayal of trust and cover-ups.
- The growing movement to abolish apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s and early 1990s.
- The call to ecological conversion
- The addresses of Pope John Paul II to Indigenous Peoples during his travels
- The instruments of social analysis in matters of social justice
- The discussions in preparation for the Jubilee Year in 2000
- The growing understanding of the dimensions of solidarity
- The international awakening to the relationship between truth and reconciliation
- The importance of apologies and compensation

In the Catholic Church, there has been a history of compartmentalizing issues.

This creates the need for interdisciplinary efforts to examine particular issues.

How do the Scriptures, Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology, Moral Theology, Ethics, Medico-Moral Ethics, Philosophy, Church History Studies, Canon Law, Governance Studies, Spirituality studies, Pastoral Theology, and Catholic Social Teaching work together on a particular issue?

OSCAR ROMERO (1917-1980)

The witness of Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador Archdiocese in El Salvador in the late 1970s was an inspiration to many. Oscar Romero had a spirituality of the cross that deepened over his years of ministry. Earlier in his life, he had identified the cross as his heritage and mission as a priest. He grew in his understanding of Christian mission and solidarity as he listened more and more to the plight of the poor and their struggles to survive in the late 1970s.

Romero faced incredible opposition from the Government, the army and some of the church hierarchy.

Such was the pressure against him, that a month after becoming Archbishop in 1977, he flew to Rome to speak to Pope Paul VI and Cardinal Baggio about the local pressures that he was experiencing. In 1978, he returned to Rome once more for meetings with the Cardinal and the Pope.

The Pope encouraged him, saying *“I understand your difficult work, it is a work that can be misunderstood; it requires a great deal of patience and a great deal of strength. I already know that not everyone thinks like you do, that is difficult in the circumstances of your country to have this unanimity of thinking. Nevertheless, proceed with courage, with patience, with strength, with hope.”* In January 1980, he met with Pope John Paul II in Rome, and was assured of his support.

Two months later, in his homily on March 23rd, he gave this message to the army: *“In the name of God, and in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I beg you, I implore you, I order you, in the name of God, stop the repression!”*

The next day, on March 24th, 1980, he was assassinated while celebrating Mass. He was beatified in 2015 and canonized a saint in 2018. Even though I was ministering as a young priest in Brisbane, and had never met him or visited his country, I still remember the shock of hearing of his death. The numbness. The need to speak to others. The moments of intense prayer.

[PART ONE – THE DECADE 1980 – 1989](#)

1980

- [World Day for Peace 1980, Truth, the power of peace](#)
- Pope John Paul II issued a [Message on the Value and Content of Freedom of Conscience and of Religion](#).
- Encyclical of Pope John Paul II [Dives in Misericordia \(Rich in Mercy\)](#) 30 November 1980

“14. ... Christ emphasizes so insistently the need to forgive others that when Peter asked Him how many times he should forgive his neighbor He answered with the symbolic number of "seventy times seven," meaning that he must be able to forgive everyone every time. It is obvious that such a generous requirement of forgiveness does not cancel out the objective requirements of justice. Properly understood, justice constitutes, so to speak, the goal of forgiveness. In no passage of the Gospel message does forgiveness, or mercy as its source, mean indulgence towards evil, towards scandals, towards injury or insult. In any case, reparation for evil and scandal, compensation for injury, and satisfaction for insult are conditions for forgiveness. Thus the fundamental structure of justice always enters into the sphere of mercy. Mercy, however, has the power to confer on justice a new content, which is expressed most simply and fully in forgiveness. Forgiveness, in fact, shows that, over and above the process of "compensation" and "truce" which is specific to justice, love is necessary, so that man may affirm himself as man. Fulfillment of the conditions of justice is especially indispensable in order that love may reveal its own nature... ”

- The Centre of Concern in the USA published *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot S.J.

It became an important resource in the Catholic approach to social justice in the 1980s. It presented social analysis as a tool for pastoral action. Its ‘*pastoral circle*’ or ‘*circle of praxis*’ highlighted the ‘*on-going relationship between reflection and action.*’ Its *four* elements of the circle were *experience, social analysis, theological reflection* and *pastoral planning*. It applied *three* interpretative models of societal change dynamics to the development debate and to church pastoral responses – the *traditional model*, the *liberal model* and the *radical model*. It provided a questionnaire ‘*Beginning Social Analysis*’ which outlined social, economic, political and ecclesial factors. The Asian Bureau Australia enabled the resource to become readily available to Australian readers.

1981

- *World Day for Peace 1981, To serve peace, respect freedom*
- Encyclical of Pope John Paul II *Laborem exercens (on Human Work)*. Written on the 90th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum (On Capital and Labor)*

Pope John Paul II spoke of many issues including the disproportionate distribution of wealth and poverty, just development for all, movements of solidarity, the dignity of human work, the value of everyday work, the right to a just wage and personal security of the worker and family, a spirituality of work, and becoming the church of the poor.

“... there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers. This solidarity must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the subject of work, by exploitation of the workers, and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger. The Church is firmly committed to this cause, for she considers it her mission, her service, a proof of her fidelity to Christ, so that she can truly be the "Church of the poor". And the "poor" appear under various forms; they appear in various places and at various times; in many cases they appear as a result of the violation of the dignity of human work: either because the opportunities for human work are limited as a result of the scourge of unemployment, or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family.” #8

“... This Christian spirituality of work should be a heritage shared by all. Especially in the modern age, the spirituality of work should show the maturity called for by the tensions and restlessness of mind and heart...” #25

- *Letter of Pope John Paul II to H.E. Ismat T. Kittani, President of the 36th General Assembly of the United Nations Organization 14 December*

The Statement by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on the Consequences of the Use of Nuclear Weapons was attached to the Pope’s Letter to the President of the General Assembly.

“On 7-8 October 1981, under the chairmanship of Professor Carlos Chagas, President of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences... a group of fourteen specialized scientists from various parts of the world assembled to examine the problem of the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons on the survival and health of humanity.

Although most of these consequences would appear obvious, it seems that they are not adequately appreciated. The conditions of life following a nuclear attack would be so severe that the only hope for humanity is prevention of any form of nuclear war. Universal dissemination and acceptance of this knowledge would make it apparent that nuclear weapons must not be used at all in warfare and that their number should be progressively reduced in a balanced way. The above-mentioned group discussed and unanimously approved a number of fundamental points, which have been further developed in the following statement... “

1982

- [World Day for Peace 1982, Peace: a gift of God entrusted to us!](#)
- [Message of Pope John Paul II to the General Assembly of the United Nations](#) 7 June

“Figures from various sources all point to a serious increase in military expenditures represented by a greater production of different kinds of weapons along with which, according to specialized institutes, there is a new rise in the sale of weapons. Recently the news media has given a great deal of attention to research and use on a wider scale of chemical weapons. Moreover new kinds of nuclear weapons have also come into existence. Before an assembly as competent as this one, there is no need to repeat the figures which your own organization has published on this subject. It is sufficient, as an indication, to refer to the study according to which the sum total of military expenditures on the planet corresponds to a mean of \$100 per person per year, a figure which for many people who live on this earth is all they would have annually to survive...”

“... The teaching of the Catholic Church in this area has been clear and consistent. It has deplored the arms race, called nonetheless for mutual progressive and verifiable reduction of armaments as well as greater safeguards against possible misuse of these weapons. It has done so while urging that the independence, freedom and legitimate security of each and every nation be respected. I wish to reassure you that the constant concern and consistent efforts of the Catholic Church will not cease until there is a general verifiable disarmament, until the hearts of all are won over to those ethical choices which will guarantee a lasting peace.”

1983

- [World Day for Peace 1983, Dialogue for peace, a challenge for our time](#)
- [The Challenge of Peace](#) - A Pastoral Letter on War and Peace United States Conference of Catholic Bishops May 3, 1983
- Presentation of the [new Code of Canon Law](#) (February 3, 1983)

Book II is titled the [People of God](#)

Canons 208 – 223 listed the obligations and rights of all the Christian Faithful.

According to Canon. 222 §2. The Christian faithful *“are also obliged to promote social justice and, mindful of the precept of the Lord, to assist the poor from their own resources”*.

Canon. 223 §1. stated *“In exercising their rights, the Christian faithful, both as individuals and gathered together in associations, must take into account the common good of the Church, the rights of others, and their own duties toward others.”*

Canons 224 – 231 listed the obligations and rights of the lay Christian Faithful.

Canons 273 – 289 listed the obligations and rights of clerics

- Apostolic Pilgrimage of Pope John Paul II to **Poland** (June 16 - 23, 1983)
- **International Theological Commission** [Propositions on the Dignity and Rights of the Human Person](#) (1983)

A hierarchy of human rights is explained.

“... Certain human rights are so “fundamental” (Decl. 1948) that they can never be gainsaid without belittling the dignity of human persons. In this regard the International Pact of 1966 (art. 412) presents certain rights that can never be put aside, e.g., every person’s inherent right to life (art. 6), recognition of the dignity of the physical person and the fundamental equality of persons (art. 16), freedom of conscience and religion (art. 17). Religious liberty may in some respects (the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, speaking to participants in the Fifth Colloquium Juridicum: L’Osservatore Romano, 11 March 1984, p. 6) be regarded as the basis of all other rights. Some, however, would claim this primacy for equality.

There are other rights of a lesser nature (International Convention, 1966, art. 5.2) but also basically essential. Among these are civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights concerned with more particular situations. Indeed, in some sense these rights will appear at times as contingent consequences of fundamental rights, as conditions involved in practical application, and also as closely bound to actual circumstances of times and places.

Consequently, provided there is no denial of the fundamental rights themselves, these lesser rights may present themselves as less immune, especially in difficult circumstances.

Finally, there are other human rights that are not requisites of the rights of nations or strictly obligatory norms but postulates of an ideal of progress toward a universal “humanization”.

What is at stake here is the achievement of the highest human ideal, and this is the obligation—since this is the desire of all citizens—of all those charged with the care of the common good and political life. International assistance may be necessary here in particular cases (Decl. 1948, end of Prologue).

When it comes to a judgment about the practical implementation of these lesser rights, the demands of the common good must be borne in mind or, in other words, the totality “of social conditions that make possible, for groups and for individuals, the full and timely attainment of their own perfection” (GS 26).”

1984

- [World Day for Peace 1984, "From a new heart, peace is born"](#)
- [Address of Pope John Paul II in Canada To Indigenous peoples and Inuits](#) (September 10, 1984)
- Pope John Paul II at the [Liturgy of the Word with Indigenous peoples in Canada \(September 15, 1984\)](#)

“... Through his Gospel Christ confirms the native peoples in their belief in God, their awareness of his presence, their ability to discover him in creation, their dependence on him, their desire to worship him, their sense of gratitude for the land, their responsible stewardship of the earth, their reverence for all his great works, their respect for their elders. The world needs to see these values - and so many more that they possess - pursued in the life of the community and made incarnate in a whole people.”

1985

- [World Day for Peace 1985, Peace and youth go forward together](#)
- [Message of Pope John Paul II for the 19th World Communications Day "Social Communications for a Christian Promotion of Youth"](#) Sunday, 19 May 1985.

“According to the right to information which every person has, communication must always respond in its content to the truth, and out of respect for justice and charity it ought to be complete. With all the greater reason, this hold true when the communication is addressed to young people, who are in the position of opening themselves to the experiences of life. Above all in this case, information cannot remain indifferent to values which touch human existence down to the roots, such as the primacy of life from the moment of its conception, the moral and spiritual dimension, peace, and justice. Information cannot be neutral in face of problems and situations which on the national and international levels damage the connective fabric of society, such as war, violation of human rights, poverty, violence, drugs... The mass media, as elements of unity and advancement, must overcome ideological and political barriers, walking with humanity in its march towards peace, and assisting the process of integration and fraternal solidarity among peoples, in two directions, East-West and North-South. As vehicles of education and culture, the mass media must contribute to the renewal of society and, in particular, to the human and moral development of young people, focusing their awareness on the historic tasks which await them on the threshold of the third millennium.”

1986

- [World Day for Peace 1986, Peace is a value with no frontiers North-South, East-West: only one peace](#)
- Address of Pope John Paul II [To the Diplomatic Corps in Wellington \(November 23, 1986\)](#)

“...In a world in which distance is overcome by modern means of transport and communication, in a world which is increasingly interdependent despite its diversity, there can only be one peace if there is to be any peace at all. To the extent that any one people or nation closes itself against all others or against the legitimate aims of another people or nation, there can be no peace in the world. Excessive self-interest leads only to strategies of injustice, repression and violence, whether within a nation or between nations.” #2

“... I appeal to you to help the world to see diversity as a source of blessing and peace rather than a source of discord.

We would be naive to think that all conflicts and disagreements will be abolished. But may we not hope for wise and human leaders who have the courage to transcend ideologies, narrow interests, and purely political ends, and who are willing to bear witness to the unity of mankind? May we not hope, ladies and gentlemen, that the different peoples and nations of the world will grow in their humanity by seeking a deeper understanding of the diversity

of others, a greater appreciation of the point of view of others, and a more generous respect for the legitimate hopes and aspirations of people who are different from themselves? May we not hope that we ourselves, people of different lands and beliefs, will help to foster one peace for all by greater understanding, appreciation and respect for one another in our daily lives? This is possible only if we are willing to take the path of dialogue.” #3

- Address of Pope John Paul II [To the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders of Australia in Alice Spring November 29](#)

“From the earliest times men like Archbishop Polding of Sydney opposed the legal fiction adopted by European settlers that this land was terra nullius – nobody’s country. He strongly pleaded for the rights of the Aboriginal inhabitants to keep the traditional lands on which their whole society depended. The Church still supports you today. Let it not be said that the fair and equitable recognition of Aboriginal rights to land is discrimination. To call for the acknowledgment of the land rights of people who have never surrendered those rights is not discrimination. Certainly, what has been done cannot be undone. But what can now be done to remedy the deeds of yesterday must not be put off till tomorrow.

Christian people of good will are saddened to realize – many of them only recently – for how long a time Aboriginal people were transported from their homelands into small areas or reserves where families were broken up, tribes split apart, children orphaned and people forced to live like exiles in a foreign country. The reserves still exist today, and require a just and proper settlement that still lies unachieved. The urban problems resulting from the transportation and separation of people still have to be addressed, so that these people may make a new start in life with each other once again.” #10

1987

- [World Day of Peace Message Development and Solidarity: Two Keys to Peace.](#)

“To recognize the social solidarity of the human family brings with it the responsibility to build on what makes us one. This means promoting effectively and without exception the equal dignity of all as human beings endowed with certain fundamental and inalienable human rights.”

Examples of obstacles to solidarity

*“- a xenophobia that closes nations in on themselves or which leads governments to enact discriminatory laws against people in their own countries;
- the closing of borders in an arbitrary and unjustifiable way so that people are effectively deprived of the ability to move and to better their lot, to be reunited with their loved ones, or simply to visit their family or reach out in care and understanding to others;
- ideologies that preach hatred or distrust, systems that set up artificial barriers. Racial hatred, religious intolerance, class divisions are all too present in many societies, both openly and covertly. When political leaders erect such divisions into internal systems or into policies regarding relationships with other nations, then these prejudices strike at the core of human dignity. They become a powerful source of counteractions that further foster division, enmity, repression and warfare.*

Another evil, which in this past year brought so much suffering to people and havoc to society, is terrorism.

To all of these, effective solidarity offers an antidote.”

Development and people

“When we reflect on commitment to solidarity in the field of development, the first and most basic truth is that development is a question of people. People are the subjects of true development, and the aim of true development is people. The integral development of people is the goal and measure of all development projects.”

- Pope John Paul II issued [*Sollicitudo rei socialis \(On Social Concern\)*](#).

Written for the 20th anniversary of Pope Paul VI’s encyclical [*Populorum Progressio \(On the Development of Peoples\)*](#)

Pope John Paul II speaks of the continuity and renewal of Catholic Social Teaching, its principles of reflection, its criteria of judgment, its basic directives for action, our common destiny, respect for life, ecological concern, solidarity, the option or love of preference for the poor.

Continuity and constant renewal of social teaching

“... to reaffirm the continuity of the social doctrine as well as its constant renewal. In effect, continuity and renewal are a proof of the perennial value of the teaching of the Church. This twofold dimension is typical of her teaching in the social sphere. On the one hand it is constant, for it remains identical in its fundamental inspiration, in its "principles of reflection," in its "criteria of judgment," in its basic "directives for action," and above all in its vital link with the Gospel of the Lord. On the other hand, it is ever new, because it is subject to the necessary and opportune adaptations suggested by the changes in historical conditions and by the unceasing flow of the events which are the setting of the life of people and society.” #3

Peace, respect for life, ecological concern

“... as a sign of respect for life - despite all the temptations to destroy it by abortion and euthanasia - is a concomitant concern for peace, together with an awareness that peace is indivisible. It is either for all or for none. It demands an ever greater degree of rigorous respect for justice and consequently a fair distribution of the results of true development. Among today's positive signs we must also mention a greater realization of the limits of available resources, and of the need to respect the integrity and the cycles of nature and to take them into account when planning for development, rather than sacrificing them to certain demagogic ideas about the latter. Today this is called ecological concern.” #26

Solidarity

“...Solidarity is undoubtedly a Christian virtue. In what has been said so far it has been possible to identify many points of contact between solidarity and charity, which is the distinguishing mark of Christ's disciples (cf. Jn 13:35)... One's neighbor must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person's sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: to lay down one's life for the brethren (cf. 1 Jn 3:16).

... Solidarity therefore must play its part in the realization of this divine plan, both on the level of individuals and on the level of national and international society. The "evil

mechanisms" and "structures of sin" of which we have spoken can be overcome only through the exercise of the human and Christian solidarity to which the Church calls us and which she tirelessly promotes. Only in this way can such positive energies be fully released for the benefit of development and peace.” #40

Interpreting realities

“... The Church's social doctrine is not a "third way" between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather, it constitutes a category of its own. Nor is it an ideology, but rather the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to guide Christian behavior. It therefore belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology. The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church's evangelizing mission. And since it is a doctrine aimed at guiding people's behavior, it consequently gives rise to a "commitment to justice," according to each individual's role, vocation and circumstances. The condemnation of evils and injustices is also part of that ministry of evangelization in the social field which is an aspect of the Church's prophetic role. But it should be made clear that proclamation is always more important than condemnation, and the latter cannot ignore the former, which gives it true solidity and the force of higher motivation.” #41

Option or love of preference for the poor

“... Here I would like to indicate one of them: the option or love of preference for the poor. This is an option, or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our social responsibilities and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods. Today, furthermore, given the worldwide dimension which the social question has assumed, this love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and, above all, those without hope of a better future. It is impossible not to take account of the existence of these realities. To ignore them would mean becoming like the "rich man" who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate (cf. Lk 16:19-31).” #42

- Apostolic Journey of Pope John Paul 11 to **Poland** (June 8-14, 1987)

1988

- [World Day for Peace 1988, Religious freedom: condition for peace](#)
- The Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace issued the document [The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society](#)

Purpose of the document

"the Holy Father asked the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace to help enlighten and awaken consciences about this major concern: namely, the reciprocal respect between ethnic and racial groups as well as their fraternal coexistence. Such a task presupposes a lucid analysis of complex situations of both past and present, as well as an unbiased judgment about moral shortcomings and positive initiatives, in the light of fundamental ethical principles and the Christian message... This document sets out to examine, in the first place, the phenomenon of racism in the strict sense. On occasion, however, it also treats some other manifestations of conflictual attitudes, intolerance and prejudice, insofar as these have a kinship with racism or contain racist elements. In the light of its principal focus, the document thus notes the bonds which exist between certain conflicts and racial prejudice." #1

Some instances of racism in history are given in articles #2- #7.
Forms of racism today include the phenomena of exclusion or aggressivity #8, institutionalized racism such as apartheid #9, racial discrimination against Indigenous Peoples #10, discriminatory legislation against religious minorities # 11, ethnocentricity #12, forms of social racism and new forms of slavery #13, the phenomenon of spontaneous racism #14, manifestations of systematic racial distrust including anti-Semitism #15, and new and as yet unknown forms of racism that might appear #16.

Further development of the documents included

"principle of the equal dignity of all persons, of whatever race "#18

"... forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design." #24

Community

"... It is not through external means-legislation or scientific proofs-that racial prejudice can be uprooted. It is indeed not enough that laws prohibit or punish all types of racial discrimination: these laws can easily be gotten around if the community for which they are intended does not fully accept them. To overcome discrimination, a community must interiorize the values that inspire just laws and live out, in day-to-day life, the conviction of the equal dignity of all." #24

Spiritual convictions

"A change of heart cannot occur without strengthening spiritual convictions regarding respect for other races and ethnic groups. The Church, on its part, contributes to forming consciences by clearly presenting the entire Christian doctrine on this subject. She particularly asks pastors, preachers, teachers and catechists to explain the true teaching of Scripture and Tradition about the origin of all people in God, their final common destiny in the Kingdom of God, the value of the precept of fraternal love, and the total incompatibility between racist exclusivism and the universal calling of all to the same salvation in Jesus Christ. Recourse to the Bible to justify a posteriori any racist prejudice must be firmly denounced." #25

Defence of the victims of racism

“Doctrine and examples by themselves are not sufficient. The victims of racism, wherever they may be, must be defended. Acts of discrimination among persons and peoples for racist or other reasons-religious or ideological-and which lead to contempt and to the phenomena of exclusion, must be denounced and brought to light without hesitation and strongly rejected in order to promote equitable behavior, legislative dispositions and social structures...” #26

Racism poisons Peace

“Lastly, if racism troubles the peace of societies, it also poisons international peace. Where there is no justice on this major issue, violence and wars easily break out, and relations with neighboring nations are disturbed. In relations between States, a faithful application of the principles of the equal dignity of all peoples should exclude that certain nations be treated by others on the basis of racial prejudices...” #32

Conclusion of Document

“... There are different degrees and forms of racism. Racism as such is applied to contempt for a race characterized by its ethnic origin, color or language... Racism and racist acts must be condemned... The Holy See has its role to play in the context of its specific mission. All Catholics are invited to work concretely side by side with other Christians and all others who have this same respect for persons. The Church wants first and foremost to change racist attitudes, including those within her own communities. She appeals first of all to the moral and religious sense of people. She states exigencies but uses fraternal persuasion, her only weapon. She asks God to change hearts. She offers a place for reconciliation. She would like to see promoted initiatives of welcome, of exchange and of mutual assistance as regards men and women belonging to other ethnic groups. Her mission is to give soul to this immense undertaking of human fraternity. Despite the sinful limitations of her members, yesterday and today, she is aware of having been constituted a witness to Christ's charity on earth, a sign and instrument of the unity of humankind. The message she proposes to everyone, and which she tries to live is: "Every person is my brother or sister." Conclusion

- The Congregation for Catholic Education issued [Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests](#). Published 1989

Its table of contents follows.

Introduction.

1. Nature of Social Doctrine.

11. Historical Dimension of Social Doctrine.

111. Permanent Principles and Values.

1V. Criteria and Judgement.

V. Directives for Social Action.

V1. Formation. Conclusion

Appendix 1 – Index of Topics which may be Useful in Teaching the Social Doctrine of the Church in Seminaries

-principles and guidelines - Logical premise, the human person, human rights, person-society independence, the common good, human solidarity, subsidiarity, participation, organic concept of social life.

-attainment of principles and values on different levels - Social doctrine and social science, in the family, in the economy (private property, work, the firm as work community), in politics, in culture, in science technology, in the international community, in ecology, the social question of the Third World.

Appendix 2 – *Texts of the Social Magisterium of the Church corresponding to some of the more significant notes of the ‘Guidelines’.*

- Apostolic Constitution of Pope John Paul II - [Pastor Bonus \(28 June 1988\)](#). From #142 to # 144 it explained the role of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Art. 142 — The goal of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace is to promote justice and peace in the world in accordance with the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church.

Art. 143 — § 1. The Council makes a thorough study of the social teaching of the Church and ensures that this teaching is widely spread and put into practice among people and communities, especially regarding the relations between workers and management, relations that must come to be more and more imbued with the spirit of the Gospel.

§ 2. It collects information and research on justice and peace, about human development and violations of human rights; it ponders all this, and, when appropriate, shares its conclusions with the groupings of bishops. It cultivates relationships with Catholic international organizations and other institutions, even ones outside the Catholic Church, which sincerely strive to achieve peace and justice in the world.

§ 3. It works to form among peoples a mentality which fosters peace, especially on the occasion of World Peace Day.

Art. 144 — The Council has a special relationship with the Secretariat of State, especially whenever matters of peace and justice have to be dealt with in public by documents or announcements.

1989

- [World Day for Peace 1989, To build peace, respect minorities](#)

First Principle

“In a nation made up of various groups of people there are two general principles which can never be abrogated and which constitute the basis of all social organization. The first of these principles is the inalienable dignity of every human person, irrespective of racial, ethnic, cultural or national origin, or religious belief . Individuals do not exist for themselves alone, but achieve their full identity in relation to others. The same can be said about groups of people. They indeed have a right to a collective identity that must be safeguarded, in accordance with the dignity of each member. Such a right remains intact even in cases in which the group, or one of its members, acts against the common good. In such situations, the alleged abuse must be addressed by the competent authorities, without the whole group being condemned, since that would be against justice. At the same time, the members of minority groups have the duty to treat others with the same respect and sense of dignity.”

Second Principle

“The second principle concerns the fundamental unity of the human race, which takes its origin from the one God, the Creator, who, in the language of Sacred Scripture, "made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth " (Acts 17:26) . The unity of the

human family requires that the whole of humanity, beyond its ethnic, national, cultural and religious differences, should form a community that is free of discrimination between peoples and that strives for reciprocal solidarity. Unity also requires that differences between the members of the human family should be used to strengthen unity, rather than serve as a cause of division. The obligation to accept and defend diversity belongs not only to the State and to the groups themselves.”

Rights of minorities

“The first right of minorities is the right to exist. This right can be ignored in many ways, including such extreme cases as its denial through overt or indirect forms of genocide. The right to life as such is inalienable, and the State which perpetrates or tolerates acts aimed at endangering the lives of its citizens belonging to minority groups violates the fundamental law governing the social order.

The right to exist can be undermined also in more subtle ways. Certain peoples, especially those identified as native or indigenous, have always maintained a special relationship to their land, a relationship connected with the group's very identity as a people having their own tribal, cultural and religious traditions. When such indigenous peoples are deprived of their land they lose a vital element of their way of life and actually run the risk of disappearing as a people.

Another right which must be safeguarded is the right of minorities to preserve and develop their own culture... Closely connected with this right is the right to have contact with groups having a common cultural and historical heritage but living in the territory of another State. ... the right to religious freedom, since this was the theme of my Message for last year's World Day of Peace. This right applies to all religious communities, as well as to individuals, and includes the free manifestation of religious beliefs, both individually and collectively. Consequently, religious minorities must be able to worship as a community, according to their own rites. They must also be in a position to provide religious education through appropriate teaching programmes and to utilize the necessary means to this end... the State should effectively ensure and promote the observance of religious freedom, especially when, alongside the great majority who follow one religion, there exist one or more minority groups of another faith.

Finally, religious minorities must be guaranteed a legitimate freedom of exchange and contacts with other communities, both within and outside their own national borders.”

Corresponding duties of minorities

“Every right carries with it corresponding duties . Members of minority groups also have their own duties towards society and the State in which they live: in the first place, the duty to cooperate, like all citizens, for the common good. Minorities, in fact, must offer their own specific contribution to the building of a peaceful world that will reflect the rich diversity of all its inhabitants. Secondly, a minority group has the duty to promote the freedom and dignity of each one of its members and to respect the decisions of each one, even if someone were to decide to adopt the majority culture.”

- [Address of Pope John Paul II to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See 9 January 1989](#)

“... Let us hope then that the developments which have taken place recently in the Soviet Union and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe will help to create favourable conditions for a change of climate and for an evolution of national legislations, so as to move effectively from the stage of a proclamation of principles to one which guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of every person. Such a process in these countries should lead in particular to the emergence of a concept of religious freedom understood as a true civil and social right... The past year also very happily witnessed the beginning of a negotiated settlement of several conflicts in other regions. I am thinking first of all of the long awaited cease fire signed between Iran and Iraq Their decision to begin talks under the aegis of the United Nations Organization is encouraging, to the extent that these discussions foster dialogue and strengthen the desire for peace of the two parties. In this regard, however, there is one aspect which I cannot pass over in silence: the return of the prisoners of war to their homelands. At the beginning of this New Year, which is an occasion everywhere for family reunions, how can we forget all those who have spent these holidays far from their loved ones? How can we fail to express the hope that the Authorities of these two countries, assisted by the competent International Organizations, will come to an agreement concerning the methods of repatriation, and thus shorten the sufferings of these men and give many families the joy of reunions so impatiently awaited?” #2

“... A right to development and to the environment are also beginning to be spoken of today. In this "third generation" of human rights, it is often a question of demands which are still difficult to translate into binding juridic terms so long as no authority is capable of ensuring their application. But, in the end, all of this shows humanity's growing awareness of interdependence with nature, whose resources - created for all, but limited - must be protected, especially through close international cooperation.” #5

PART TWO – THE DECADE 1990 – 1999

1990

- [**World Day of Peace, “Peace with God, the Creator, Peace with All Creation”**](#)
- [**Address of Pope John Paul 11 to the Diplomatic Corps 13 January**](#)

Quotations from article 7, 8 and 9 are included here.

“Warsaw, Moscow, Budapest, Berlin, Prague, Sofia and Bucharest, just to mention the capital cities, have become as it were the stages on a long pilgrimage towards freedom. We must honour those people who, at the cost of immense sacrifices, have courageously undertaken this pilgrimage; we must also honour the political leaders who have assisted it. What is admirable in the events that we have witnessed is the fact that whole peoples have spoken up: women, young people and men have overcome their fear. The human person has shown the inexhaustible resources of dignity, courage and freedom concealed within itself. In countries where for years a party has told people what to believe and the meaning to be given to history, these brothers and sisters have shown that it is not possible to stifle the fundamental freedoms that give meaning to human life: freedom of thought, conscience, religion expression, and political and cultural pluralism.” #7

“These aspirations, expressed by the various peoples, must be satisfied through the rule of law in every European nation. Ideological neutrality, the dignity of the human person as the

source of rights, the fact that the person comes before society, respect for democratically agreed juridical norms, pluralism in the organization of society: these are the irreplaceable values without which it is impossible to build in any lasting way a common home from East to West, one accessible to all and open to the world...” #8

“The time has come for Western Europeans, who have the advantage of having lived for many years in freedom and prosperity, to help their brothers and sisters in Central and Eastern Europe to regain fully their due place in the Europe of today and tomorrow...” #9

1991

- [World Day of Peace Message If You Want Peace, Respect the Conscience of Every Person.](#)

“No human authority has the right to interfere with a person's conscience. Conscience bears witness to the transcendence of the person, also in regard to society at large, and, as such, is inviolable. Conscience, however, is not an absolute placed above truth and error. Rather, by its very nature, it implies a relation to objective truth, a truth which is universal, the same for all, which all can and must seek... Every individual has the grave duty to form his or her own conscience in the light of that objective truth which everyone can come to know, and which no one may be prevented from knowing. To claim that one has a right to act according to conscience, but without at the same time acknowledging the duty to conform one's conscience to the truth and to the law which God himself has written on our hearts, in the end means nothing more than imposing one's limited personal opinion.”

- Encyclical of Pope John Paul II - [Centesimus Annus \(One Hundred Years On\)](#) on the 100th anniversary of modern Catholic Social Teaching.

Article 25 draws on the experience of 1989.

“The events of 1989 are an example of the success of willingness to negotiate and of the Gospel spirit in the face of an adversary determined not to be bound by moral principles. These events are a warning to those who, in the name of political realism, wish to banish law and morality from the political arena. Undoubtedly, the struggle which led to the changes of 1989 called for clarity, moderation, suffering and sacrifice. In a certain sense, it was a struggle born of prayer, and it would have been unthinkable without immense trust in God, the Lord of history, who carries the human heart in his hands. It is by uniting his own sufferings for the sake of truth and freedom to the sufferings of Christ on the Cross that man is able to accomplish the miracle of peace and is in a position to discern the often narrow path between the cowardice which gives in to evil and the violence which, under the illusion of fighting evil, only makes it worse.

Nevertheless, it cannot be forgotten that the manner in which the individual exercises his freedom is conditioned in innumerable ways. While these certainly have an influence on freedom, they do not determine it; they make the exercise of freedom more difficult or less difficult, but they cannot destroy it. Not only is it wrong from the ethical point of view to disregard human nature, which is made for freedom, but in practice it is impossible to do so...” #25

Article 37 addresses the ecological question.

“Equally worrying is the ecological question which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way. At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day. Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him. In all this, one notes first the poverty or narrowness of man's outlook, motivated as he is by a desire to possess things rather than to relate them to the truth, and lacking that disinterested, unselfish and aesthetic attitude that is born of wonder in the presence of being and of the beauty which enables one to see in visible things the message of the invisible God who created them. In this regard, humanity today must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future generations...” #37

Article 57 explains that Catholic Social Teaching is a basis and motivation for action, from which the witness of actions flow.

The phrases “preferential option for the poor” and “the Church’s love for the poor” are inclusive. Some historical examples are mentioned.

“As far as the Church is concerned, the social message of the Gospel must not be considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action. Inspired by this message, some of the first Christians distributed their goods to the poor, bearing witness to the fact that, despite different social origins, it was possible for people to live together in peace and harmony. Through the power of the Gospel, down the centuries monks tilled the land, men and women Religious founded hospitals and shelters for the poor, Confraternities as well as individual men and women of all states of life devoted themselves to the needy and to those on the margins of society, convinced as they were that Christ's words "as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40) were not intended to remain a pious wish, but were meant to become a concrete life commitment. Today more than ever, the Church is aware that her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the witness of actions than as a result of its internal logic and consistency. This awareness is also a source of her preferential option for the poor, which is never exclusive or discriminatory towards other groups. This option is not limited to material poverty, since it is well known that there are many other forms of poverty, especially in modern society—not only economic but cultural and spiritual poverty as well. The Church's love for the poor, which is essential for her and a part of her constant tradition, impels her to give attention to a world in which poverty is threatening to assume massive proportions in spite of technological and economic progress. In the countries of the West, different forms of poverty are being experienced by groups which live on the margins of society, by the elderly and the sick, by the victims of consumerism, and even more immediately by so many refugees and migrants. In the developing countries, tragic crises loom on the horizon unless internationally coordinated measures are taken before it is too late.” #57

Article 58 outlines the meaning of the promotion of justice and love for the poor.

“Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the promotion of justice. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. Only such an awareness can give the courage needed to face the risk and the change involved in every authentic attempt to come to the aid of another. It is not merely a matter of "giving from one's surplus", but of helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of life-styles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies. Nor is it a matter of eliminating instruments of social organization which have proved useful, but rather of orienting them according to an adequate notion of the common good in relation to the whole human family... ” #58

Article 59 connects the gift of grace and human freedom.

“Therefore, in order that the demands of justice may be met, and attempts to achieve this goal may succeed, what is needed is the gift of grace, a gift which comes from God. Grace, in cooperation with human freedom, constitutes that mysterious presence of God in history which is Providence.

The newness which is experienced in following Christ demands to be communicated to other people in their concrete difficulties, struggles, problems and challenges, so that these can then be illuminated and made more human in the light of faith. Faith not only helps people to find solutions; it makes even situations of suffering humanly bearable, so that in these situations people will not become lost or forget their dignity and vocation.

In addition, the Church's social teaching has an important interdisciplinary dimension... this teaching enters into dialogue with the various disciplines... ” #59

[1992-1994](#)

In 1992, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) and the Southern African Catholic Bishops Conference (SACBC) launched the **Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in South Africa (EMPSA)**. The World Council of Churches and the Vatican encouraged international church volunteers to participate. The first team arrived in October 1992. 443 volunteers from 32 nations participated as operational monitors between October 1992 and the South African election in 1994. Average length of deployment was 6 weeks. Fourteen Australians were operational monitors within the first four months of 1994. Other categories of EMPSA teams were Eminent Persons and Experts.

[1992](#)

- [World Day for Peace 1992, Believers united in building peace](#)
- [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#)

Part Three of the Catechism included articles on Catholic Social Teaching and other moral issues.

Part Three, Section One

Chapter One: The Dignity of the Human Person

Article One: The Human Person: The Image of God

Article Two: Our Vocation to Beatitude included [The Beatitudes](#); [The Desire for Happiness](#); [Christian Beatitude](#).

Article Three: Human Freedom included [Freedom and Responsibility](#); [Human Freedom in the Economy of Salvation](#).

Article Four: The Morality of Human Acts included [The Sources of Morality](#); [Good Acts and Evil Acts](#)

Article Five: The Morality of the Passions included [Passions](#); [Passions and Moral Life](#).

Article Six: Moral Conscience included [The Judgment of Conscience](#); [The Formation of Conscience](#); [To Choose in Accord With Conscience](#); [Erroneous Judgment](#)

Article Seven: The Virtues included [The Human Virtues](#); [The Theological Virtues](#); [The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Spirit](#)

Article Eight: Sin included [Mercy and Sin](#); [The Definition of Sin](#); [The Different Kinds of Sins](#); [The Gravity of Sin: Mortal and Venial Sin](#); [The Proliferation of Sin](#)

Chapter Two: The Human Communion

Article One: The Person and Society included [The Communal Character of the Human Vocation](#); [Conversion and Society](#).

Article Two: Participation in Social Life included [Authority](#); [The Common Good](#); [Responsibility and Participation](#).

Article Three: Social Justice included [Respect For the Human Person](#); [Equality and Differences Among People](#); [Human Solidarity](#)

Chapter Three: God's Salvation: Law and Practice

Article One: The Moral Law included [The Natural Moral Law](#); [The Old Law](#); [The New Law or the Law of the Gospel](#).

Article Two: Grace and Justification included [Justification](#); [Grace](#); [Merit](#); [Christian Holiness](#).

Article Three: The Church, Mother and Teacher included [Moral Life and the Magisterium of the Church](#); [The Precepts of the Church](#); [Moral Life and Missionary Witness](#)

***Part Three, Section Two: The Ten Commandments.**

Chapter One covered the first three commandments.

Chapter Two: You Shall Love Your Neighbour As Yourself, covered the fourth to tenth commandments.

Fourth Commandment topics included [The Family in God's Plan](#); [The Family and Society](#); [The Duties of Family Members](#); [The Family and the Kingdom](#); [The Authorities In Civil Society](#)

Fifth Commandment included [Respect for Human Life](#); [Respect for the Dignity of Persons](#); [Safeguarding Peace](#).

Sixth commandment included ["Male and Female He Created Them..."](#) ; [The Vocation to Chastity](#); [The Love of Husband and Wife](#); [Offenses Against the Dignity of Marriage](#).

Seventh Commandment included [The Universal Destination and the Private Ownership of Goods](#); [Respect for Persons and Their Goods](#); [The Social Doctrine of the Church](#); [Economic Activity and Social Justice](#); [V. Justice and Solidarity Among Nations](#); [Love For the Poor](#).

Eighth Commandment included [Living in the Truth](#); [To Bear Witness to the Truth](#); [Offenses Against Truth](#); [Respect for the Truth](#); [The Use of the Social Communications Media](#); [Truth, Beauty, and Sacred Art](#).

Ninth commandment included Purification of the Heart; The Battle for Purity

Tenth Commandment included [The Disorder of Covetous Desires](#); [The Desires of the Spirit](#); [Poverty of Heart](#); ["I Want to See God"](#)

The Catechism has been updated in some areas, for example, the teaching on the death penalty in 1997 and in 2018.

The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church was published in 2005.

1993

- [**World Day for Peace 1993, If you want peace, reach out to the poor**](#)

“Our world also shows increasing evidence of another grave threat to peace: many individuals and indeed whole peoples are living today in conditions of extreme poverty. The gap between rich and poor has become more marked, even in the most economically developed nations. This is a problem which the conscience of humanity cannot ignore, since the conditions in which a great number of people are living are an insult to their innate dignity and as a result are a threat to the authentic and harmonious progress of the world community.”

“... The poorest countries' right to development imposes upon the developed countries a clear duty to come to their aid. The Second Vatican Council said in this regard: "Everyone has the right to have a part of the earth's goods that is sufficient for each and his or her dependents.... We are obliged to support the poor, and not just from our surplus" (Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes, n. 69). The Church's admonition is clear, and it is a faithful echo of the voice of Christ: earthly goods are meant for the whole human family and cannot be reserved for the exclusive benefit of a few (cf. Encyclical Letter Centesimus annus, nn. 31 and 37). ”

- [**The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace**](#) A Reflection of the National Conference of US Catholic Bishops on the Tenth Anniversary of The Challenge of Peace November 17, 1993

1994

- [**World Day for Peace 1994, The family creates the peace of the human family**](#)
- Pope John Paul issued [**Tertio Millennio Adveniente \(The Third Millennium\)**](#)

- **Human Rights in the Teaching of the Church: from John XXIII to John Paul II.**

It was edited by Dr Giorgio Filibeck and produced by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the International Federation of Catholic Universities in 1994. The 17 chapters in Part One are about the key concepts of Human rights. Chapters 18 – 34 in Part Two are about specific rights.

1995

- [World Day for Peace 1995, Women: teachers of peace](#)
- Sister Maura Ward PBVM wrote and edited 'Yes , You Do Count - A Comprehensive Teaching Programme on Human Rights' for the Churches' Peace Education Programme of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace and the Irish Council of Churches.
- [Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women](#)

"I know of course that simply saying thank you is not enough. Unfortunately, we are heirs to a history which has conditioned us to a remarkable extent. In every time and place, this conditioning has been an obstacle to the progress of women. Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have often been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity. Certainly it is no easy task to assign the blame for this, considering the many kinds of cultural conditioning which down the centuries have shaped ways of thinking and acting. And if objective blame, especially in particular historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, for this I am truly sorry. May this regret be transformed, on the part of the whole Church, into a renewed commitment of fidelity to the Gospel vision... Yes, it is time to examine the past with courage, to assign responsibility where it is due in a review of the long history of humanity... "

- Encyclical of Pope John Paul II [Evangelium Vitae \(The Gospel of Life\)](#)

In article 12, Pope John Paul 11 speaks about the challenges in the world of widespread moral uncertainty, structure of sin, the culture of death, and a conspiracy against life. He examines individual moral issues in articles #13 to #17. Statements about life itself include #28, #41, #44, #48 and #57.

** " In fact, while the climate of widespread moral uncertainty can in some way be explained by the multiplicity and gravity of today's social problems... This reality is characterized by the emergence of a culture which denies solidarity and in many cases takes the form of a veritable "culture of death". This culture is actively fostered by powerful cultural, economic and political currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency. Looking at the situation from this point of view, it is possible to speak in a certain sense of a war of the powerful against the weak: a life which would require greater acceptance, love and care is considered useless, or held to be an intolerable burden, and is therefore rejected in one way or another. A person who, because of illness, handicap or, more simply, just by existing, compromises the well-being or life-style of those who are more favoured tends to be looked upon as an enemy to be resisted or eliminated. In this way a kind of "conspiracy against life" is unleashed. This conspiracy involves not only individuals in their personal, family or group relationships, but goes far beyond, to the point of damaging and distorting, at the international level, relations between peoples and States." #12*

* "... The unconditional choice for life reaches its full religious and moral meaning when it flows from, is formed by and nourished by faith in Christ." #28

* "... Thus the deepest element of God's commandment to protect human life is the requirement to show reverence and love for every person and the life of every person." #41

* "Human life finds itself most vulnerable when it enters the world and when it leaves the realm of time to embark upon eternity..." #44

* In #48, the truth of life is explained, that by accepting God's gift of life, we are "obliged to maintain life in this truth which is essential to it."

* "... As far as the right to life is concerned, every innocent human being is absolutely equal to all others. This equality is the basis of all authentic social relationships which, to be truly such, can only be founded on truth and justice, recognizing and protecting every man and woman as a person and not as an object to be used. Before the moral norm which prohibits the direct taking of the life of an innocent human being "there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone. It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the 'poorest of the poor' on the face of the earth. Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal" #57

1996

- [World Day For Peace 1996, Let us give children a future of peace](#)
- [Address of Pope John Paul II on his Apostolic Journey to Tunisia. Meeting with Representatives of the World of Culture, Politics and Religion. Carthage](#)

"... When a people's deepest aspirations are unfulfilled, the consequences can be disastrous. They can lead to simplistic solutions which threaten the freedom of individuals and societies and which some even seek to impose by violence. If, on the contrary, future prospects based on real solidarity among all are open to the citizens, they will be more encouraged to advance on the way of true human progress in justice and harmony. It is obvious that it is not the task of religious leaders to find technical solutions to the problems of the modern economy and international co-operation. Nonetheless, they have a great responsibility in social life. They must somehow be society's conscience, recalling the ethical principles to be considered is when making concrete choices, by appealing to respect for true human values, such as respect for life, human dignity and honesty. It is also their duty to speak on behalf of those who are the weakest, the most deprived, whose voice cannot be heard. Concern for the most underprivileged is not the responsibility of the public authorities alone; it must be everyone's concern."

- [A Catholic Framework for Economic Life](#). A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops November 1996
- [Address of Pope John Paul II to the New Ambassador of South Africa to the Holy See. 12 December](#)

"... You have mentioned South Africa's rebirth as a "new nation", one which rejects segregation and discrimination in order to walk the path of unity and brotherhood. The recent history of your country clearly shows that peace is a victory won when the human spirit is determined to reject the ways of division and conflict in order to follow the path of

forgiveness and reconciliation. Peace calls for a courage much greater than that required by the blind vindictiveness which would resort to violence. While it is important that the truth about the past should be known and responsibility laid where it is due, it is even more important that the delicate process of building a just and harmonious multiracial society should go forward.

As you have noted, many difficulties remain. They are aggravated and compounded by subtle forms of exploitation still afflicting the whole African continent: the crushing burden of debt, unjust trading practices, the constraints imposed by economic restructuring programmes. If justice and peace are to prevail, international solidarity must replace all forms of exploitation. Wealthier nations are called to show "a sense of moral responsibility for the other nations, so that a real international system may be established which will rest on the foundation of the equality of all peoples."

1997

- [World Day For Peace 1997, Offer forgiveness and receive peace](#)
- Address of Pope John Paul II [At the closing of the Special Assembly for America of the Synod of Bishops \(December 11, 1997\)](#)

"... The common call to follow Christ has made us understand the disturbing situations in which many of our brothers and sisters live. Many of them, in fact, find themselves in conditions contrary to the dignity of God's children: extreme poverty, lack of minimal care for illness; widespread illiteracy; exploitation; violence; and drug dependency... And how could we fail to remember the thousands of lay faithful who, in response to your call, have become your close co-workers in apostolic activity? They co-operate in a wide variety of ways in the work of evangelization, especially in small communities of the faithful, who, in the heart of the major cities, in the countryside, and in the far away towns, meet together to pray and listen to the Word of God. There are also the lay faithful — men and women — who, following their specific lay vocation, are skillfully involved in the various political, economic and social areas of life, so that they can be imbued with Gospel ferment, in order to build a world of greater justice, fraternity and solidarity."

1998

- [World Day For Peace 1998, From the justice of each comes peace for all](#)
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace sponsored the **World Congress on the Pastoral Promotion of Human Rights**.
- Address of Pope John Paul II [To the Bishops of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands on their "ad limina" visit \(December 1, 1998\)](#)

"... Your Reports speak of a rising tide of violence and division, which makes it difficult to shape a society based on the notion and practice of the common good. The war in Bougainville may be over, but the wounds remain; and the process of healing will be long and complex. The threat of "rascalism" ... Tribalism, with the spirit of vengeance it generates, ... Corruption in its many forms is a another kind of violence, ... spiritual violence... The situation reflects a certain breakdown of the traditional ways of your cultures, with the consequent weakening of the structures and institutions which gave traditional societies their stability and transmitted the values which gave them life... In a cultural situation as

diversified as yours, it is never easy to overcome division and counter violence; yet the promotion of harmony and of a culture of the common good is deeply related to the truth of the Gospel and calls for your wise and energetic spiritual leadership.”

- Address of Pope John Paul II **To Italian Catholic Jurists** (December 5, 1998)

“... modern legal theory, in which there is a universal consensus on the issue of human rights, which embodies the age-old requirements of natural law doctrine... The convention you are holding these days has for its theme: "Solidarity between ethics and law". In the perspective of the new millennium, you wished to identify the theme of solidarity as a logical outcome of your 50 years of reflection on the natural law. This is a very important subject, closely connected with that of the natural law: the dimension of solidarity expresses a right that is not an arbitrary tool in the hands of the more powerful, but a sure means of justice.”

1999

- [World Day of Peace Message Respect for Human Rights: The Secret of True Peace.](#)
- [Document by the International Theological Commission - Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past.](#)

The document is dated December 1999 and published 2000. Hence it could be listed in this reflection or the next one which includes the Jubilee Year of 2000. The purpose of purification of memory, expressions of regret, admissions of past faults and asking for forgiveness are explained in these quotes.

“... Not only did John Paul II renew expressions of regret for the “sorrowful memories” that mark the history of the divisions among Christians, as Paul VI and the Second Vatican Council had done, but he also extended a request for forgiveness to a multitude of historical events in which the Church, or individual groups of Christians, were implicated in different respects. In the Apostolic Letter Tertio millennio adveniente, the Pope expresses the hope that the Jubilee of 2000 might be the occasion for a purification of the memory of the Church from all forms of “counter-witness and scandal” which have occurred in the course of the past millennium. The Church is invited to “become more fully conscious of the sinfulness of her children.” She “acknowledges as her own her sinful sons and daughters” and encourages them “to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency and slowness to act.” The responsibility of Christians for the evils of our time is likewise noted, although the accent falls particularly on the solidarity of the Church of today with past faults. Some of these are explicitly mentioned, like the separation of Christians, or the “methods of violence and intolerance” used in the past to evangelize. John Paul II also promoted the deeper theological exploration of the idea of taking responsibility for the wrongs of the past and of possibly asking forgiveness from one’s contemporaries... “

“... The entire process of purification of memory, however, insofar as it requires the correct combination of historical evaluation and theological perception, needs to be lived by the Church’s sons and daughters not only with the rigor that takes account of the criteria and principles indicated above, but is also accompanied by a continual calling upon the help of the Holy Spirit. This is necessary in order not to fall into resentment or unwarranted self-recrimination, but to arrive instead at the confession of the God whose “mercy is from age to age” (Lk 1:50), who wants life and not death, forgiveness and not condemnation, love and

not fear. The quality of exemplarity which the honest admission of past faults can exert on attitudes within the Church and civil society should also be noted, for it gives rise to a renewed obedience to the Truth and to respect for the dignity and the rights of others, most especially, of the very weak. In this sense, the numerous requests for forgiveness formulated by John Paul II constitute an example that draws attention to something good and stimulates the imitation of it, recalling individuals and groups of people to an honest and fruitful examination of conscience with a view to reconciliation... “

As the 20th Century ended, social justice issues still needed to be addressed seriously and comprehensively, in many areas such as Indigenous issues, church sexual abuse, models of governance, the leadership and participation of women in the church, caring for the earth, lifestyle witness, gender issues, domestic violence, human rights, refugees and asylum seekers, consumerism, peace advocacy, clericalism and synodality.

Pope John XXIII in the 1960s, changed the focus of social justice teaching, to include *people of goodwill*.

May we journey together.

As we strive to make a difference, may we acknowledge how the Holy Spirit has challenged us in every era.

Father Gerry Hefferan
20 October 2022